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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour
... a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

July Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term July average:

Great Lakes Basin	94%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	80%
Lake Superior	105%

LEVEL news

Volume 5, Number 8 **August 7, 1997**

Drier July Offered Some Relief,

but the Risk of Serious Damage Remains High

Below average rainfall in July halted a rise in the water levels on Lakes Michigan-Huron. However, readers are advised that water levels on these lakes and Lakes Superior, St. Clair and Erie will remain very high as we approach the fall season when more storms are likely to occur.

At the beginning of August, all the lakes were well above average; by 14 cm on Lake Superior, 58 cm on Lakes Michigan-Huron, 62 cm on Lakes St. Clair and Erie, and 15 cm on Lake Ontario.

A return of wet weather conditions could cause the levels of Lakes Superior and Michigan-Huron to rise again and raise the levels of Lakes St. Clair and Erie to record highs.

After peaking in May, Lake Ontario has been declining slowly, and the decline is expected to continue over the next few months. Lake Erie appears to have peaked in early June, with its June and July levels slightly below the record maximums which occurred in 1986.

In the St. Lawrence River, levels at Montreal and on Lake St. Louis were above average last month, a condition brought on by high flows from Lake Ontario. Lake St. Lawrence, the area between Cornwall and Iroquois, was about one-half metre below average in July. The low levels there were due to the high flows at the hydropower dam at Cornwall/Massena.

Repairs at Compensating Works Progressing Well

Repairs to the two gates at the 16-gate Compensating Works in the St. Marys River are expected to be completed in about two months. The structure, completed in 1921, is undergoing an overhaul that includes gate seals/sill replacement, mechanical repairs and general painting. Eleven gates have been upgraded over the past few years, and two are scheduled for 1998.

Several gates adjacent to the two being repaired are closed to ensure worker safety. The reduced capacity at the compensating works for the past two months has resulted in a small amount of water being retained on Lake Superior. For August, sufficient gates are available for regulation purposes.

Lakes Michigan-Huron	99%
Lake Ontario	69%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

July Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term July average:

Lake Superior	147%
Lake Erie	124%
Lake Huron	111%
Lake Ontario	122%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

The required four gates open, along with the flows through the three hydropower plants that bypass the structure, should result in Lake Superior outflow as specified by regulation plan for August.

Emergency Operations remain in Lake Ontario Regulation

High Lake Ontario outflows directed by the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control have helped reduce the levels of Lake Ontario. However, the lake's level remains above average and very high flows from Lake Erie are expected to continue. As a result, the Board would most likely maintain high Lake Ontario outflows in August.

Public Meetings

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control received both praise and complaints from the public at meetings held in Brockville, Ontario on July 2nd. Shore property owners on Lake Ontario were generally satisfied with actions taken by the Board in lowering lake levels this spring. Those who live and boat on Lake St. Lawrence, however, were not satisfied with the low water levels brought on by high flows at Cornwall/Massena. The one-day event consisted of a round-table discussion in the afternoon and a public meeting in the evening. The round-table discussion was attended by representatives of stakeholders who, in addition to discussion with the Board, had the opportunity to converse amongst themselves concerning water level issues. About 60 people attended the meetings.

Water Level Information on the Web

There is an abundance of water level and other related information available on the World Wide Web. Historic data, data for the current and previous months, and data as recent as for the previous day are available for lake levels. Preliminary precipitation data are also available, as are maps of precipitation during the previous day over much of the Great Lakes basin. Other types of data available include wind speeds and directions, wave heights and water temperatures. Some of these data are updated hourly.

A good starting point for links to many of these data is at:
http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/water/levels/

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